

**DECISION****THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548**

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**FILE:** B-211692**DATE:** June 9, 1983**MATTER OF:** Eugene S. Sheskin

**DIGEST:** The return travel expenses of an employee who abandoned a temporary duty assignment for personal reasons may not be paid since it was administratively determined that he did not substantially complete the assignment. The assignment was to evaluate a 2-week training course and the employee returned home at the end of the first week. Since the administrative determination was not shown to be improper or unjustifiable it will not be disturbed.

Mr. Eugene S. Sheskin, an employee of the United States Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, appeals the denial by our Claims Group of his claim for travel expenses. We conclude that the claim may not be paid based on the present record.

Mr. Sheskin claims reimbursement for travel expenses, in the amount of \$168.19, which he incurred in returning to Washington, D.C., his regular duty station, from Glynco, Georgia, where he had been assigned to perform a 2-week temporary duty assignment. He was authorized to travel to Glynco on July 19, 1982, to attend and evaluate a training course for the purpose of determining whether it was suitable for regulatory auditors in the Customs Service's regional offices.

Mr. Sheskin states that his wife became ill shortly before he left for Glynco, and that on Friday morning, July 23, at the end of the first week of the temporary duty assignment, he felt the necessity to return home to determine the state of his wife's health because she had advised him that she was exhausted. He says he discussed the course format and materials with the instructors, who indicated to him that the materials he had obtained contained a substantial portion of the materials that would be covered during the second week of the course. He says that after an attempt to contact his supervisor concerning his situation by telephone and receiving a busy signal, he returned to his regular duty station on Friday and contacted his supervisor on Sunday, July 25.

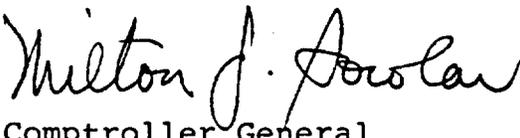
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Generally, when an employee abandons a temporary duty assignment for personal reasons, the cost associated with his return to the permanent duty station will not be paid by the Government, unless it is administratively determined that the employee substantially completed the purpose of the assignment before he abandoned it, or the duties he was to perform were completed at no additional expense to the Government. Matter of Berger, B-189160, April 18, 1978; B-172048, March 29, 1971.

Mr. Sheskin contends that he substantially completed the mission of his temporary assignment, but the director of the audit division to which he is assigned does not agree that the assignment was completed. In support of his contentions, Mr. Sheskin has provided a copy of the three-page evaluation report he states he produced in completion of the assignment. He also states that he had prior knowledge of the relevant course material which the audit director objected to his having missed, from "handouts" he received while at Glynco and from attending a similar course 6 years previously.

The question of whether an employee substantially completed a temporary duty assignment prior to abandoning it for personal reasons is a matter for administrative determination by the employing agency. In this case the responsible agency official determined that Mr. Sheskin did not substantially complete his assignment. The information which Mr. Sheskin has provided is not sufficient to support a conclusion that the administrative determination in this instance was improper or unjustifiable. The fact that he may have had a prior knowledge of certain material that was covered in the second week of the course following his departure has no bearing on whether he did in fact complete the purpose of this assignment which was to evaluate the 2-week course.

Therefore, we will not disturb the administrative determination in this case, and the denial of this claim by the Claims Group is sustained.

for   
Comptroller General  
of the United States